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ABSTRACT

In Germany as elsewhere, enterprises are becoming increasingly convinced that the initial costs of increasing attention to promoting the employment of women are offset by the medium- and long-term benefits to the enterprise because of a larger pool of qualified female employees. This attitude change is partly due to the fact that, in western Germany, women are currently less affected than men by structural economic changes. Traditional forms of promoting employment and equality of opportunity strategies are increasingly being included as part of total quality management. Attempts to improve equality of opportunity and maintain skills within enterprises in the context of total (e)quality activities are being made. It is believed that an equal opportunity policy will act as a stimulus that will encourage employees to identify more closely with corporate objectives and initiate a higher level of employee commitment and awareness of responsibility. Besides benefiting female employees, (e)quality systems provide important benefits to work organizations (for example, such systems help employers preserve increasingly important human resources, avoid hire-and-fire costs, and better identify the interests of female customers). Promotion of the employment of women must be linked at the organizational level with the creation of a pluralistic corporate culture. (Contains 42 references) (MN)

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No. 28

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Gerhard Engelbrech

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Total (E)quality Management:

Paradigmatic Shift in Personnel Management

- **Total Quality Management and Equality Activities**
- **Equality of Opportunity Strategies as Part of Total Quality Management Policy**
- **Benefits from (E)quality Systems**
- **Recommendations for Companies**
- **Promoting (E)quality Policy for Enterprises**

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Gerhard Engelbrech*

Total (E)quality Management: Paradigmatic Shift in Personnel Management

0 Abstract

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* Gerhard Engelbrech is a research associate at the Institut für Arbeitsmarkt- und Berufsforschung

0 Abstract

Periods of economic recession and job losses do not seem to be particularly auspicious conditions for discussing the promotion of the employment of women. Nevertheless, it appears that women in western Germany are currently less affected than men by structural changes, at least in quantitative terms. In addition, the emphasis in enterprises indicates a rethink in terms of the qualitatively better use of existing staff resources. The objective of this strategy, frequently included as part of total quality management, is to allow all employees at all levels in the enterprise equal opportunities to exploit their knowledge and abilities to the full and to make a contribution to the company. If, in so doing, working conditions and workflows are oriented or adapted to meet the various professional capabilities and interests of men and women in the enterprise, important preconditions for (e)quality management (equality and quality) will be achieved.

1 Introduction

Emerging economic, structural and social changes (Klauder 1994, pp. 45ff.) in a number of companies are currently resulting in a renaissance of their traditional management philosophies, although quantitatively and qualitatively to different degrees. A challenge for corporate personnel policy in the future will be presented by the ever-increasing importance of a qualified workforce, a more intense level of global competition which will persist into the future, and changing social awareness with a stronger individualization of the life scenarios of men and women (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1994, pp. 10 ff.). In these general conditions, the integration of women at work has increasingly become the focus of corporate personnel policy, whether this integration is considered from a human resources perspective or from the point of view of the reduced possibility of women being able to fulfil their career aspirations in the economic downturn (Engelbrech, 1994, p. 852) and their employment in lower-paid jobs (Engelbrech and Kraft, 1992. Therefore, much greater importance is being attached to the enterprise "as a social arena with a greater degree of organizational openness with regard to current restructuring processes" (Kutzner 1995).

The continued increase in employment opportunities for women, in particular the opening up of new professions and areas of activity, further improvement in the chances of promotion and the greater possibilities for reconciling family and work have been hailed not only by trade unions, but increasingly by employers as "an important function of corporate personnel policy" (Bundesvereinigung der Arbeitgeberverbände [Federal Confederation of German Employers' Associations] 1989). An example is to be found in the following joint declaration of the board of management and the central staff council of the German telecommunications company Deutsche Telekom AG: "In a company looking firmly towards the future, women contribute on equal terms to the success of the company at all levels" (Ihlefeld-Bolesch, 1995). The corporate mission statement of one department store states that "we treat men and women equally, demand efficiency and offer opportunities for self-development" (Dick and Osse, 1995, p. 352). In the preamble to a programme started by a bank with the aim of promoting the employment of women, the following sentence may be found: "In order to make better use of the potential reserves of talent in our workforce, the talents and aptitudes of women should be fostered more deliberately than has been the case in the past" (Klinge-Hagenauer, 1990, pp. 156ff.).

A succession of representatives of industry, both male and female, have already in recent years sought a mutual exchange of experiences with regard to successful initiatives and examples of the encouragement given to women in middle and senior management positions (Taten statt Worte, 1992). This commitment to a policy of equality of opportunity may be supplemented by a number of other corporate examples.

Enterprises are increasingly convinced that the initial costs incurred in devoting more attention to promoting the employment of women are offset by the medium and long-term benefits to the enterprise arising due to a larger pool of qualified female employees, thus increasing the potential for problem solving within the organization (Zauner, 1990, p. 39). Apart from the preservation of existing human resources, another reason for enterprises reacting in this way is that the more companies want to prevent administrative interference, the more social pressure increases (Zauner, 1990, p. 75). However, there is currently a significant shortfall in the practical implementation in enterprises of efforts to achieve equality of opportunity, with the result that matters frequently do not progress beyond a declaration of intent. In addition, survey findings indicate that there may often be a huge gap between what is intended and the real effectiveness of existing measures designed to promote the employment of women or equality of opportunity (Hadler, 1995, pp. 333ff.).

As a result, when implementing measures to promote the employment of women, enterprises must face up to the question as to whether new approaches to dealing with human resources within corporate personnel policy, such as total quality management (TQM) strategies, can boost the company's competitivity while at the same time ensuring equality of opportunity within the enterprise. The close interrelationships between equality and quality within the framework of total equality management is presented below as one possibility for consistent implementation in enterprises. The objective is to make better use of existing potential and to organize the use of staff more efficiently, thus being able to make a contribution towards equality of opportunity for women and men in their working lives.

2 Total quality management and equality activities

Changing direction

It does not appear self-evident at first sight that the issue of the promotion of the employment of women and its implementation in enterprises is or continues to be a burning issue in a period of economic recession and job losses, not least in view of the fact that the economic slump of the early 1990s caused a trend towards the withdrawal of existing measures concerning support programmes for women, the majority of which had been introduced up to the end of the 1980s (Brumlop and Hornung 1994, pp. 836 ff.). Gaps in employment history, especially for less-skilled women, were increasingly used as a selection option. Nevertheless, it is precisely during the current economic difficulties that, in addition to demands for increases in productivity and efficiency through technology-based rationalization, discussion of qualitatively different management systems is being given greater priority (Reuther, 1993, p. 11). The principal idea behind this rethink is the expectation that a paradigmatic shift in personnel policy and personnel management will mean that existing or potential personnel resources may be used in a better way and therefore that competitivity may be maintained. As a result, more attention is being focused on corporate planning and actions on human resource management. Total Quality Management (TQM) has become the watchword for the direction followed by corporate

strategies with a greater emphasis on customers, work patterns, process flows and, above all, on employees (Oess, 1993, p. 120). It is anticipated that a better use of existing resources will trigger off a chain reaction of lower costs, an improvement in the competitive position, a more satisfied workforce and an increase in the number of jobs (Deming, 1982).

An important component of TQM is the consideration given to individual requirements and the "social system" (Ishikawa, 1985, p. 85). Forward-looking corporate cultures, where there is an emphasis on the participation, identification and responsibility of employees, are not just considered a "fair weather" concept, but rather from a longterm point of view (Beyer et al., 1995, p. 19). Productivity remains the overriding criterion, but this does not rule out the initiation of specific measures promoting the employment of women in order to cut down on the number of recognized weak points and, in so doing, to lay the foundation for competition on more equal terms (Domsch and Regnet, 1990, p. 101). If the success of total quality management is also regarded as enabling all employees in the company at all levels and to the same extent to use their knowledge and abilities to the full and to contribute this knowledge and these abilities to the company, then the conditions for an (e)quality management strategy (equality and quality) have been created (Shapiro and Austin, 1995).

From generalization to diversity

In order to achieve this objective, a corporate personnel and human resources management policy is required which is responsive to the diversity of male and female employees and has a pluralistic orientation. This means that emphasis must not only be placed on the qualifications and abilities of each male and female employee but also on their differing interests and potentialities. This applies particularly to the relationship between men and women and also within the category of women depending on marital status, the number of children, age etc. In TQM-oriented companies, therefore, female employees are not treated any differently a priori from male employees just because they are still in a minority in certain posts. Discrimination frequently not only harms those who are discriminated against, but also those who carry out the discrimination. Those who only have their eyes fixed on the short-term extra costs involved in the implementation of measures promoting the employment of women overlook the fact that, besides the adverse effect on the company's image, enterprises will lose the opportunity to make use of an efficient production factor (Albach, 1994). It is much more a question of overcoming the prejudices in the way that enterprises think and act arising from the traditional allocation of roles according to gender or outmoded everyday experiences, and of placing greater emphasis on personnel policy strategies that promote equality of opportunity. This often requires far-reaching changes in corporate personnel policy, which in many cases are "bloody and brutal surgical operations on an organism" (Dierkes, 1994, p. 173). These changes must be reflected above all in the following areas and measures:

- *A new awareness in management*, those responsible for personnel departments and all employees - identification with equality of opportunity as a corporate objective, persuasion and public relations work, and marketing strategies and personnel recruitment tailored to this objective.
- *A conscious corporate* reaction to sociocultural changes and a shift in social values as an integral part of corporate philosophy.
- *Staff recruitment*, recruitment of junior staff and filling of vacancies - job advertisements, candidate selection and appointment irrespective of gender; employment and suitability test procedures with this aim in mind, and work in informing, convincing and training managers.
- *Training and staff development plans* - requirement and function-oriented training in all departments, regular staff development discussions, implementation of systematic staff

development (analysis of potential, staff development analyses, assessment centres, follow-up plans), regular discussions on career planning.

- *New work patterns and workflows*- implementation of group and project work and participation of women.
- *Reconciling family and work* - regulations on the flexible arrangement of working hours at all functional levels, corporate support for child care, arrangements for career breaks and support on re-employment.
- *Encouraging of co-operative behaviour* at the workplace - selection of central themes, information and legitimation, establishment of contact and advice centres.
- *Institutionalization of activities* regarding equality of opportunity - establishment of a staff unit with responsibility for such activities, discussion circles for skilled workers and managers, organization of plant agreements, collective pay agreements and codes of practice.

3 Traditional forms of promoting employment of women and equality of opportunity strategies as part of total quality management policy

Bottom-up

Schemes for promoting the employment of women, the majority of which originated and were introduced in the 1980s, were frequently brought into enterprises from outside and initiated "from below" by highly-motivated female employees. As a sort of pioneering work, promotion of the employment of women was regarded in the circumstances prevailing at the time as a bottom-up strategy, the aim of which was the establishment of binding rules for corporate and personnel management. Attempts to promote the employment of women were traditionally structured in terms of deficit programmes with measures specifically designed for certain problem groups. These programmes focused on discrimination against women on the basis of their family duties, with particular attention being paid to those at the lower and middle levels of the hierarchy. Promotion of the employment of women was therefore primarily seen as a social duty and as an instrument to cushion disadvantages that were specific to women by the use of special programmes in enterprises to enable family and work to be reconciled better. The proportion of women at work and in the labour market, and therefore the labour force participation of women, was to be raised by defined objectives and quotas specified and initiated by female employees. The starting point was the varying allocation of roles in the family and at work depending on gender and the diverging basic interests in enterprises, which were frequently responded to in practice by "mother and child schemes" (Brumlop and Hornung, 1994, p. 836).

Top-down

Attempts to improve equality of opportunity and maintain skills within enterprises in the context of total (e)quality activities involve more than covering the deficits of specific problem groups with what in some cases is no more than a veneer of charity. In terms of staff promotion strategy, an equal opportunity policy is to be seen as an integral part of a management policy that is aimed at the continuous improvement of quality (Hefftner, 1990, p. 141). The principal idea is that, in the present circumstances of a more intense level of global competition in the markets for high-quality products, modifications to workflows and new marketing strategies, support for male and female employees is being and must be developed to go beyond existing gender-specific labour markets to become a key instrument in personnel management (Shapiro, 1995, p. 81). Efforts to improve equality of opportunity in enterprises are being

integrated into this new method of considering quality. They are endorsed by company management and passed on through line management to male and female employees as a top-down strategy (Dick and Osse, 1995, p. 352). An equal opportunity policy will act as a stimulus encouraging employees to identify more closely with corporate objectives and may initiate a higher level of commitment and awareness of responsibility. As a result, therefore, (e)quality efforts contribute to raising productivity.

Focus on the individual rather than the organization

The overall conditions for top-down strategies for a quality policy aimed at equality of opportunity are provided by integral management systems. A policy of equality, as a constituent part of total quality management, must therefore also be aimed at managerial efficiency and can be achieved solely by a personnel policy which hinges around the qualifications of all male and female employees and their individual potential (Seghezzi and Hansen, 1993, p. 139).

Although a successful company must constantly look outwards and try to predict customer requirements, internally a paradigmatic shift in personnel management is needed. Whereas in the past it was people who had to adapt to organizational requirements, is should now be the organization which has to adapt to people's requirements. In contrast to traditional quality management theories, TQM focuses on the integration of male and female employees in the enterprise as individuals (Crosby, 1990) Employee-oriented workflows and production processes are considered to be the only guarantee that corporate objectives will be successfully achieved (Ihlefeld-Bolesch, 1995). This does not inevitably lead to higher costs, as in more traditional systems, but may be effected by maintaining and taking advantage of the qualifications of existing or prospective staff. This means that an equal opportunity policy within enterprises is an essential integral part of the implementation of TQM strategies. Not only that, the degree of success of an equal opportunity policy depends on the extent to which this policy is linked to corporate objectives within the range of policy instruments available to management (Positive Aktionen Nr. 1, 1995).

4 What benefits can enterprises and female employees derive from (e)quality systems?

Increasing outside pressure on enterprises to adapt, the demand for flexible responses, new work patterns, the less standard nature of normal working conditions and changing social demands mean that innovative corporate thinking focuses increasingly on aspects of quality and equality. At the same time, it is frequently the case today that, theoretically at least, companies consider human resource management directed towards female employees to be a prerequisite for the effective achievement of corporate objectives (Dierkes, 1994). However, in practice the connection in enterprises between human resource management and the traditional barriers that have to be broken down to allow women to participate to a greater extent both quantitatively and qualitatively in companies is not necessarily perceived automatically (Wuppertaler Kreis, 1994, p. 19). One of the reasons for this is the fact that cost-benefit analysis is rarely carried out. As a result, productivity gains (customer image, working conditions, lower rate of labour turnover, costs to the enterprise of time off for family reasons) are not very transparent and cannot be implemented easily (Holtermann, 1995, p. 137).

Organizational benefits

Preservation of increasingly important human resources

Restructuring processes for products and technologies result, on the one hand, in alterations to production processes, work content and corporate business units and, on the other hand, as new markets are created with goods that require intensive research and development effort, there is a trend towards enterprise-oriented and production-related services. These developments result in the human resource production factor taking on increasing importance. Staff qualifications are becoming more expensive, not only for individuals, but also for companies. Investment in human resources that is not exploited must be written off more quickly and the half-life of applicable knowledge is becoming shorter all the time. Enterprises which make known externally a skills management policy aimed at achieving equality of opportunity become more attractive for skilled female employees during staff recruitment. Internally, a personnel policy oriented towards the interests of female employees also leads to a lower level of absenteeism or costs arising due to family reasons and promotes motivation and a willingness to work among female employees.

Fears and economically-motivated reservations that women are a greater investment risk than men are belied by empirical results. Women show greater loyalty to a company than men, especially where they perform activities with a degree of responsibility (Preuss, 1987, p. 460). Therefore, in addition to traditional cost factors, the calculation of which is subject to management audit, the nurturing of non-financial investment (of little importance in conventional accounting) is gaining in importance. It is clear in practice that it is small and medium-sized enterprises in particular which react unbureaucratically, with job requirements that are frequently company-specific, subject to considerable change and difficult to substitute in the short term. In overall terms, the higher level of qualifications achieved by younger women in comparison with that of men is increasingly significant for the productivity of enterprises.

Avoidance of hire-and-fire costs

Enterprises which recognize the individual requirements and potential of their staff in their management systems and in the practical implementation of these systems are able to reduce fluctuations and gaps in career paths, the latter being particularly applicable to women. A number of large enterprises which are currently moving in this direction, in particular with the introduction of accompanying measures for child care, in order to cut down on absenteeism and time off for family reasons, prevent existing human capital from being subjected to a process of skill loss, and avoid hire and fire costs. In an "increasingly unfriendly environment" in particular "a high quality of work must be achieved and it does not really make sense to lose good people because additions to the family have appeared" (Müller-Gabel, 1995). It may also be expected that the more women develop entrepreneurial behaviour, the more they will find that consideration is given to their specific interests (Dick and Osse, 1995, p. 352). Other examples indicate that enterprises which encourage female employees from their own workforce to gain additional qualifications are able to cut back on recruitment and employee familiarization costs for skilled workers and managers from outside the enterprise. This means that hire and fire costs for qualified male and female workers are reduced, which eases the burden for small and medium-sized enterprises in particular, for whom this is an important cost factor.

Female customer-oriented structural adjustment

As more and more women take up employment and living patterns move towards a partnership structure, women are making a much bigger impact as consumers, as is clearly shown, for example, by the change in the customer group targeted by advertising. Women spend 70 per cent of the private income (Schaebele, 1990, p. 199). Therefore, companies with a women-friendly image and products oriented towards female customers are more attractive and competitive (Frey, 1993). Where women have been able to occupy management positions in recent years, it has frequently been the case that the potential for new female customers has been opened up (Osterloh and Sigfrist, 1995). However, skilled women are also able to identify the interests of female customers better than men and exploit this in product design or when creating new services. Apart from the direct effects on female customers, an equal opportunities policy is an important public relations factor and enhances the company's image.

Raising female employment increases the flexibility of companies

More intense competition and a higher level of demands made by male and female customers are already resulting in a demand for greater flexibility in workflow in large enterprises, but more particularly in small and medium-sized enterprises where two-thirds of the female labour force is employed. An increasing proportion of women in work not only raises the total potential available workforce but also increases that available for non-conventional working hours. The shattering of the image of the male as sole bread-winner by the increasing number of women in work has also opened up new perspectives for working hour patterns for men. The possibility of more flexible management of working time for men and women which matches their interests also contributes therefore to being better able to cope with economic requirements when the enterprise's capacity is over or under-utilized.

Discovery of female skills as a means of structural adjustment

In the current debate surrounding personnel policy, specifically-female skills not only in communications, personnel management and customer service, but also in reorganized, integrally-oriented workflows with a stronger group involvement, have been rediscovered as new management strategies. Operational examples demonstrate that the existing technical and non-technical qualifications of female employees are particularly valuable especially for new and challenging activities. When women are employed in a range of activities that were previously dominated by men, it turns out that mixed teams encourage operational creativity and produce better results (Watson et al., 1993). For companies which particularly "like to keep their finger on the pulse and consider themselves to be employee-oriented, the aim is to achieve co-educative management so that greater synergy effects are expected in overall performance" (Lahusen, 1994, p. 30). The increasing number of well-educated women in the service sector in particular may therefore turn out to be a benefit for enterprises when restructuring activities. It has, however, been criticized that, although in many instances competences with a social integration aspect and labelled as female have been declared to be important leadership qualities, in reality they have not always been given the importance that they merit (Rustermeyer and Thrien, 1989).

Benefits for female employees

The increasing level of employment and of the wish to go out to work in the last 25 years, especially among married women, is an expression of the change in attitude to paid employment. Training leading to qualifications, a longer working life, less frequent and shorter career breaks and a higher tendency to return to work are reflections of a different way in which women see their lives unfolding. Greater emphasis is placed on women than on men, especially during the child-rearing stage. It is often not possible to do a job unless the work is organized more flexibly and enterprises have a more pronounced orientation towards opportunities for potential female employees. Although greater weight attached to the interests and wishes of female employees in corporate personnel management plans helps to counteract restrictions related specifically to women, this predominantly occurs at present only in enterprises or departments that are expanding or in less attractive jobs (Engelbrech, 1993). In such a case, women would be less exposed to family-induced stress and could concentrate more on their career. From the company's point of view, more recognition is being made in human resources policy of the fact that a reduction in the time absent or the avoidance of lengthy or definitive periods away from work benefits the enterprise more than additional investment in training after a long absence (Albach, 1994).

Expanding women's skills and competence

A corporate equal opportunities and skills policy that is also evident in-house contributes to women becoming more aware of their potential and being better able to recognize the possibilities they have in the working environment. Model examples of women's career progression in their typical domain in the past demonstrated that female employees' own commitment and self-confidence increased as a result of the possibilities for identification arising from these examples and that correspondingly positive experiences by enterprises reinforced their receptiveness towards women in management positions. If more women were to force their way into areas which have not been part of their typical domain up to now, this could contribute to making women aware of new career possibilities or indeed redeploying them in these areas, thus acting as pioneers for career progression and management functions.

Necessary flexibility requires enterprises to adapt to meet individual wishes

A potential lack of qualified workers in a whole series of skilled activities, a high level of company-specific specialization in a number of instances and the integral work scheduling necessitated by the increasing amount of team working require workflows to be organized more flexibly. The maintenance of traditional normal working conditions, especially with regard to skilled staff, with a lack of flexibility in hours and location (Dostal, 1995) not only becomes a huge cost factor, but also endangers competitivity. Although a willingness to be flexible in adapting to the customer's requirements and the obligation to operate under conditions of permanent quality assurance and quality adjustment impose a burden on enterprises, they offer women with the possibility of working unusual hours an opportunity for a skilled job and the preservation of their skills by avoiding having to give up work partially or totally. The more successful an enterprise is in reconciling its demands for flexible working hours and work scheduling with the needs and capabilities of female workers, the higher is its gain in productivity.

Identification with corporate objectives demands greater consideration accorded to individual life scenarios

New personnel management strategies and work structures which take account of the increasingly significant desires of female employees for more autonomy, self-determination and the achievement of individual life scenarios enable female employees to identify more strongly with corporate objectives. This means in turn that a contribution will be made to the achievement of these corporate objectives. Productivity is enhanced by a "structural" personnel policy used as an economic policy measure which improves the opportunities for women to fulfil their wish to work (Albach 1994). A more pronounced orientation of enterprises in the direction of the capabilities and interests of their male and female employees not only leads to a reduction in time off but also acts as a stimulus to the preservation or fostering of motivation, commitment, skills and productivity or willingness to work. Support from management systems that promote (e)quality leads to higher satisfaction both on and off the job and reinforces the links between female skilled employees and companies (Hefftner, 1990, p. 141). Enterprises therefore profit directly from the shift in social values and the new self-confidence of better-qualified women and, at the same time, personnel policy that makes allowance for this leads to a redefinition of the traditional role of women and promotes their integration in the working environment.

Commitment of small and medium-sized enterprises encourages work close to home

Personnel management aimed at creating equality of opportunity may become a locational advantage, especially for small and medium-sized enterprises which often come off second best to larger companies in the recruitment and retention of skilled workers. Reinforcing the position of these enterprises on the labour market through the use of personnel management systems aimed at creating equality of opportunity may make a contribution to maintaining competitivity. This in turn contributes to small and medium-sized enterprises continuing to offer work close to home, in contrast to employment in large, centralized enterprises. Women who are able to benefit most from this are those for whom it becomes easier to reconcile family and a skilled job.

5 Conclusion and recommendations for companies

The success of the promotion of the employment of women must be linked at organizational level with the creation of a pluralistic corporate culture, which guides working conditions and workflows in the direction of the divergent wishes and capabilities of male and female employees. In this way, it may be possible to avoid undesirable career breaks and skill loss for women and to make better use of their abilities. Individuals can identify more closely with corporate strategy and therefore in turn contribute to the achievement of corporate objectives.

Overall, personnel management systems aimed at promoting equality of opportunity contribute to enterprises having at their disposal skilled staff that may be employed flexibly. This means that enterprises can raise their own internal productivity and benefit externally from greater attractiveness and higher social esteem. This has a positive effect on recruiting and retaining skilled employees, the company's image is enhanced, there are greater sales opportunities to potential female customers and new marketing strategies and domains can be opened up. How do you go about achieving employment equal opportunities results in a company? The same way as you achieve any other results. You analyse the problem carefully, determine what you

need to do, and then set up an overall management planning and control system to make very sure that it happens - and on schedule (Powell, 1993, p. 244).
This can be implemented by

- analysing the objectives, interests and capabilities of female workers and specifying a clearly-defined set of corporate values with specific standards and strategies to reconcile these two requirements;
- analysing corporate personnel policy in terms of existing obstacles to surmounting outmoded gender stereotyping and of improving the integration of women at work;
- giving priority to retaining human resources as the most important production factor; preventing deterioration of quality and avoiding hire-and-fire costs;
- making a shift in corporate organization towards a staff-oriented personnel policy and management commitment to act as a spur on all staff levels;
- reviewing workflows, product design and marketing strategies in terms of their orientation towards female employees and female customers.

6 How can an (e)quality policy for enterprises be upgraded and mainstreaming processes be set in motion?

Total (e)quality award to be conferred on enterprises with a personnel policy aimed at promoting (e)quality of opportunity: the German experience

The first total (e)quality awards were conferred in Germany at the end of 1996. The awards were made by the Total (E)quality Deutschland working group. These awards are supported by the Federal Ministry for Education, Science, Research and Technology and the Commission of the European Union. Founder members of the Total (E)quality Deutschland working group include representatives of trade and industry (Bayer AG, DT Bad Kissingen technische Vertriebs GmbH, Deutsche Telekom AG, Hoechst AG, Albert Mühlenberg OHG, Philips GmbH and VW AG), trade unions (Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund) and employers' associations (Bundesvereinigung der Deutschen Arbeitgeberverbände), the Federal Ministries for Education, Science, Research and Technology, and for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, the training institute of the Hessischer Wirtschaft e.V. and the Institute for Employment Research of the Federal Employment Service.

What purpose does the total (e)quality award serve?

Corporate objectives aimed at operational efficiency can only be achieved by male and female employees having technical and non-technical qualifications and by a personnel policy based on their individual capabilities. Forward-looking personnel management will therefore put more emphasis on women's expertise. As a result, the promotion of the employment of women, in particular in management functions, is an important part of staff development policy for innovative, market-oriented and competitive companies. This paradigmatic shift in personnel management is a major opportunity to organize collaboration in companies on a more creative basis, thus raising competitivity. The total (e)quality award is given to companies which operate a personnel policy aimed at promoting equality of opportunity. The granting of the award is based on quality systems such as total quality management where the focus is on both male and female employees and whose objective is to use equality of opportunity to foster the potential of both male and female employees.

What are the benefits of the total (e)quality award?

Internal effects

The total (e)quality award highlights the fact that equal opportunities are one of the principles of personnel policy in the company, reflects the fashion in which the enterprise reacts to changes in values and the new way in which women and men see themselves, and contributes to improving the company's internal image. These are prerequisites for a commitment to work, identification with corporate objectives and a higher degree of integration of individual male and female employees. The total (e)quality award is therefore an expression of a personnel management system that incorporates the interests and needs of women and fosters the motivation, commitment, skills and productivity of women employees.

External effects

The total (e)quality award promotes innovative companies which have reoriented their quality management systems to include female workers and female customers. As a result, the enterprise gains in public popularity and social esteem. This has a beneficial influence on the recruitment and retention of skilled staff and helps to enhance the company's image, which means that there are greater opportunities for selling to potential female customers and new markets open up.

Who receives the total (e)quality award?

Applications are welcomed from all commercial enterprises and academic, political and administrative institutes and organizations operating in Germany. Along with their application, companies wishing to acquire the total (e)quality award must supply information on company policy with regard to equality of opportunity. They must undertake to maintain and continue to introduce positive measures to promote equality of opportunity. They must define their in-house objectives for the next two years and elaborate a binding plan of action for the implementation of the specific measures envisaged.

The award is designed to encourage enterprises to take the initiative. Application for the total (e)quality award and the accompanying commitment are completely voluntary.

What are the criteria for granting the award?

A checklist, in which companies fill in the specific measures that they have taken and give details of their defined goals and objectives, is used to examine and evaluate corporate activities related to the implementation of equality of opportunity. The criteria for granting the award are elaborated by the Total (E)quality Deutschland working group in collaboration with representatives experienced in the practical implementation of such measures. Minimum requirements must be fulfilled when assessing information received from enterprises and, at the same time, allowance will be made for the specific circumstances of each company.

Who confers the total (e)quality award?

An independent committee reviews and evaluates the information given by enterprises in the checklist. The Total (E)quality Deutschland working group confers the award. It is valid for two years and may be extended. The award consists of a certificate and a logo which may be used in marketing activities and public relations work.

How can enterprises take part?

Applications should be sent to the office of Total (E)quality Deutschland at Bad Kissingen or to the author, where enterprises can also obtain the checklist. Enterprises which submit an application undertake to implement favourable measures, prepare a binding commitment to defined goals and objectives and provide the name of a contact person.

The conferring of the award is being given a public subsidy in the pilot stage and applications may be submitted free of charge during this period. It is envisaged that the cost will subsequently be scaled according to company size and turnover.

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